

# What Every African-American Man Should Know About Flu and Pneumonia



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of Community Health*



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African-American men often don't like to talk about their health problems. They may not see a doctor until serious problems have developed. This makes prevention of illness and treatment difficult.

Understanding more about your body and how it works can help you develop a healthy lifestyle. This can prevent illness or disease. The major risky health behaviors are smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, lack of exercise, poor diet, unsafe sex and not wearing seatbelts in cars. These are things that can lead to illness, disability, and death.

Flu and pneumonia are the sixth major cause of death among African-American men. If not treated properly, both diseases can become life-threatening. The two groups at greatest risk are the elderly and children under two. Symptoms for both diseases are chills that make you shake, fever, chest pain and cough. If you have any of the symptoms, try to get to a doctor or other health care provider right away. Many black males do not have a regular doctor or a way to get health care, which increases the chances of catching these diseases.

## Risk Factors:

Both flu and pneumonia can cause serious health problems for high risk persons. Black men with chronic lung disease, chronic emphysema, chronic bronchitis, cystic fibrosis, heart disease, chronic kidney disease, weak immune systems and sickle cell are at high risk. Other risks are smoking cigarettes and lack of access to regular health care.

## What You Can Do:

You can get an annual flu shot from your doctor or local health department. If you are in a high risk group for pneumonia, you can get a shot for that, too. You can wash your hands often, especially before eating. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose or mouth. Eating healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, exercising regularly, and stopping smoking are also important.

## You Can Make the Difference:

Staying informed about your health and avoiding risky health behaviors are vital in fighting the health problems black men face today. Develop a plan that works best for you.

